

**Philadelphia-Atlantic City:
Highballing the highrollers**

December 8, 1980

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**NECIP '80:
Productive shifts in
operations and organization**

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Inside



LUTHER S. MILLER

NO MORE FRONTIERS?

One hundred years ago, the city of Boston was celebrating its 250th birthday, and in honor of the occasion the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts sealed and entombed a "Century Box," which was to be opened 100 years later. The box contained, according to records of the day, 27 documents relating to the life and times of the city and the commonwealth. One of these documents was prepared by Captain Albert A. Folsom, who had been asked to write on "Travel and Transportation by Rail."

The box was opened a few weeks ago—and Captain Folsom's document proved to be the surprise of the lot. Instead of writing about railroading in 1880, he had written his prediction of what railroading and transportation in general would be like in 1980. His prediction about railroading was brief. "Travel and transportation by rail has almost reached perfection in 1880," wrote Captain Folsom. Having reached this state of perfection, he went on to say, with no more technological frontiers to conquer, railroading would rather quickly die—due to the increasingly high cost of coal for the locomotive furnaces and the scarcity of water for the boilers. (It did not occur to him that any form of locomotion could ever replace the steam engine.)

So the railroads would wither away, he said, and by 1980 would be replaced by airships that would "be seen dotting the sky like stars."

"The velocity of these vessels will be truly wonderful," predicted the captain. "I anticipate 250 miles per hour....The aerial ship of 1980 will be propelled by a combination of motive power. Said combination will consist of electricity, compressed air and another power now unknown, and not even dreamed of....The carrying capacity of these ships will be immense. The largest will comfortably transport 10,000 people and freight besides. The length will be 1,000 to 2,000 feet....This wonderful achievement of power will exert a most beneficial effect upon mankind. It will render war between nations impossible....No nation will dare to attack another from the fact that war will at once be fearful in loss of life and most expensive in money and material."

Predicting transportation trends has always been a risky business.

"GRAB THOSE OPPORTUNITIES"

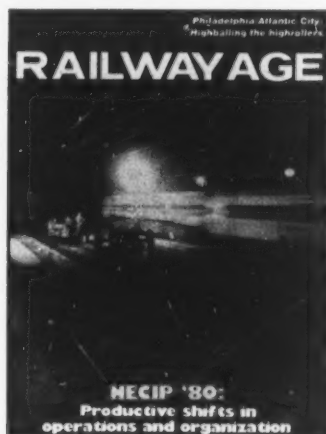
In our own 1980 series on railroad technology, we have been a little more cautious and timid than Captain Folsom. We tend to agree with L. Stanley Crane, former president of the Southern and soon-to-be chairman and CEO of Conrail, that "It may be that technology alone has taken us about as far as it can"—that the future probably holds no technological breakthroughs of the magnitude of the diesel locomotive or the computer-run class yard. We also agree with another great railroad innovator, Santa Fe President Larry Cena, that opportunities for great railroading are still there—that "All we have to do is reach out and grab those opportunities."

In his article in this issue summing up our 1980 series, Senior Editor Gus Welty speculates on how some of these opportunities might be grabbed—by combining modern-day and advanced technology (which we have, to a large degree, although there are still a few frontiers to be broken through) with advanced management methods (which we don't always have) and modernized labor agreements (which we have very few of). Gus's piece starts on p. 22.

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Plagued in its early years by organizational chaos and foot-dragging, the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project is now rolling—if not exactly speeding—toward completion. One result is that the newly published NEC schedules are, for the first time, shorter rather than longer.
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The biggest untapped rail passenger market in the U.S. is probably that which has been created by the gambling boom in Atlantic City. A number of organizations are interested in rebuilding and equipping an existing rail line—and one, the French company CGE, is ready to put money up front.
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COVER: Working at night under catenaries and between a station platform and a moving Amtrak train, an NECIP crew installs a track panel at Metuchen, N.J. Photo by Amtrak staff photographer F. B. DeMers, Jr.

NECIP '80: Productive shifts in operations and organization

By JOHN H. ARMSTRONG
Associate Editor

"Amtrak is undertaking major track rehabilitation on the Northeast Corridor route....Your understanding and patronage are appreciated as we work to bring you a better rail passenger service."

With variations, this message has become an enduring piece of fine print on NEC timetables during the last few years, but as 1980's winter brings its fourth seasonal lull in field work on the NECIP program, some shifts have become evident—in the character of what's going on out on the line, and in the organizational responsibilities behind the concrete mixers, tie tampers, and black-box installers.

Track rehabilitation is past the halfway mark in all major categories and within a few percent of completion in some (see table), and now the first two "section improvement" packages, which will put 57 miles of the route into its intended configuration as parts of the high-speed line, are in effect, with eight more to be contracted for in 1981.

Fundamental to NECIP's current prospects for continuing toward its finale in September 1985 was final enactment of legislation authorizing the \$2.5-billion program recommended by DOT's program-restructuring letter of Dec. 7, 1979. Signed last May, the 4R Act amendment added \$750 million to the original \$1.75-billion program to put into effect the \$2.5-billion program (RA, Jan. 14, p. 27) that deferred conversion of the Washington-New Rochelle ("South End") electrifica-

tion from its existing 12-kV, 25-Hz standard to 25kV and 60 Hz but included the high-voltage, 60-Hz North End (New Haven-Boston) electrification as well as adjusting and reinstating numerous alignment, station, service facility, and other program elements.

● **The 1980 season.** As usual, the most readily apparent measure of track program progress is the movement of Amtrak's track-laying machine (TLM) as it spreads aside the rails, scoops up the wood ties, and sets down their concrete replacements. As anticipated, average production per work day has been down somewhat this season (see table) when working in the South End, largely multi-track environment where train traffic density is higher and distances between interlockings are shorter. Season production as of Oct. 24 had reached 75 miles and should approach 90 miles by the time weather closes its work year.

Another big contributor to the slower progress has been the pacing progress of ballast undercutting and surfacing. On the basis of earlier years' experience, 1980's game plan called for undercutting ahead of the track-laying system (TLS) for a head start (on some segments, the season before); the necessary extra surfacing operation was accepted to keep track in service in the interim. On the South End (particularly where trackage previously maintained only for lower-speed traffic is being upgraded to Class 6 to keep trains on schedule while parallel lines are being rebuilt) ballast has often proved to be cemented "practically to Interstate High-

way standards," necessitating undercut chain change-out at intervals as short as two hours. With the preliminary surfacing that was done by the undercutter *undone* in the TLM, accomplishing the entire post-concrete-tie-surfacing in one operation has also slowed this process, sometimes to the extent of limiting the overall TLS production rate; this winter's review may result in devising yet another strategy for next year.

As the 1980 track program comes to a close, long stretches of South End main line of 120-mph quality are in place, upgrading its status as did similar installations in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and



NECIP track program

Item	Unit of measure	1977-'79	1980 (thru 10/25)	Cumulative to date	Total program	% complete
Track-laying system (concrete-tie track)	Track miles	163.6	75.5	239.1	418	57%
Ballast undercutting	"	274.6	60.0	334.6	609	55%
Ballast cleaning	"	217.8	29.0	246.8	399	62%
Wood-tie replacement	Ties	613,288	46,522	659,810	710,490	93%
Continuous welded rail	Track miles	234.4	31.3	265.7	296	90%
Joint elimination	Welds	7,803	552	8,355	11,084	93%



Working at night between platforms at the Metuchen, N.J., station, despite overhead catenaries and passing trains (see front cover), an NECIP crew installs a track panel using the Geismar (Modern Track Machines) Panel Replacement System ("PUMS"). The machine has carried the panel in over auxiliary track and jacked up itself and the panel so the trucks and auxiliary track could be withdrawn. A workman is cutting the ends of the laid rail to assure a close fit when the panel is lowered into place for welding the rails together.

Massachusetts that were completed in 1978 and 1979. So far this season, 37 turnout panels for interlockings have been built up and 43 installed (including some prefabricated last year); this account is the one major segment of Amtrak's program that has continued to greatly exceed unit cost estimates, with a projected cost-at-completion total (based on actuals through September) about 70% above plan.

Amtrak has proved-in turnout exchange with the Geismar Panel Replacement System: "It does exactly what it's supposed to," says FRA's NECIP Director Louis S. Thompson in reviewing project status, "though the crews don't yet have the production efficiency they want. We haven't yet demonstrated that we have the experience in sequencing all the signal work, operations control, track cut-overs, and so on that have to be done at the same time in reconfiguring a major interlocking to do the job efficiently while keeping the railroad alive. That is the part of the program I have to be most concerned about—not whether it can be done or not, but so far as staying on schedule and within the money we have available."

Other "KIPS" (Key Items of Performance) on Amtrak's monthly report

print-outs, from TLM and wood-tie renewals to high-speed surfacing and way-side turnout rehabilitation, are generally at, or even well below, unit-cost targets, though production rates have lagged in some cases. Overall cost efficiency vs plan, which on the basis of current methods of calculation was 47% in 1977, 69% in 1978, and 90% by the end of the 1979 season, has remained at 90% so far this year.

A particularly bright spot this autumn has been the essentially total completion of the Hudson River tunnel track work, somewhat ahead of schedule. All track (and ballast) has been replaced on a panel-

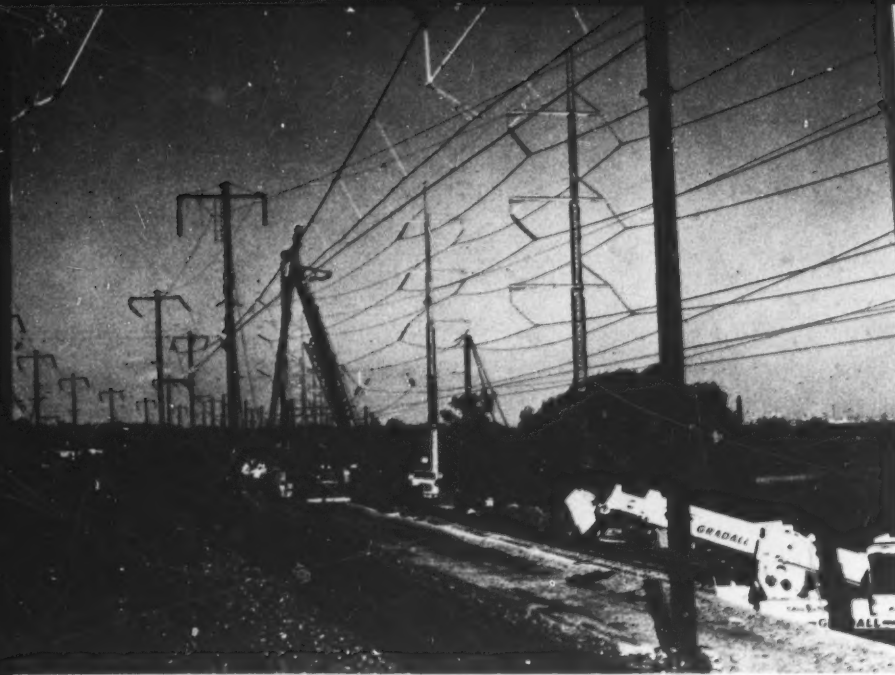
by-panel, weekends-only basis and then rerailed with cwr. Bringing the speed limit back to 60 mph from 30 on this three-mile stretch saves three minutes for every train on this busiest segment of the railroad. For clearance reasons, this remains a wood-tie section of line.

● **Organization to match the job.** The original "hydra-headed monster" organization of NECIP management among FRA, its "Program Manager" DeLeuw Cather/Parsons, and Amtrak was formally put to death by a Memorandum of Agreement signed in March 1979. This greatly clarified and simplified working arrangements that by that time had become relatively harmonious. Under that first agreement, FRA would let and supervise contracts to do those things (long in the planning/design stages under the shadow of overall program reviews and redirections) that will finally convert sections of the railroad line to new-look status by realigning curves, improving drainage, reconfiguring interlockings, increasing bridge clearances, and placing catenary pole foundations, for example. Amtrak would support these contracts by doing corresponding track-related work with its own forces and contracts.

The impracticability of this approach became increasingly apparent: "There was just no way that such matters as track access on a live railroad could be coordinated with any degree of efficiency." So, in a second agreement of Apr. 16, 1980, which Thompson considers illustrative of the new climate in which the organizations involved no longer consider defense of their turf a priority matter, re-

TLS performance review

	1978	1979	1980 (thru 10/25)
Track miles	41.5	112.1	75
Work days	122	174	138
Miles/day, average	.34	.64	.54
Days more than 0.75 mile	7	64	28
Days more than 1.00 mile	1	22	3



Catenary poles are repositioned for clearance at a realigned curve north of Wilmington.

sponsibility for some \$450 million of "section improvement" work was transferred from FRA to Amtrak, which will now award, supervise, and support the implementing contracts.

Section improvement contracting got off to a quick start with the May award to a local firm (Flippo Construction) of a \$3.4-million contract; with \$1.2 million of Amtrak support, it covers two curve realignments, eight interlocking reconfigurations, 11 bridge rehabilitations, and drain-

age improvements on the 18.5-mile Land-lith to Baldwin section north of Wilmington.

A second section improvement contract covering the 38.2 miles from Washington to Fulton (Baltimore) was let to Peter Kiewit Sons in September; the \$11.2-million contract, with \$6 million of Amtrak support, will realign 13 curves, reconfigure seven interlockings, rehabilitate one bridge, and improve drainage. It also covers gantlet track and roadway

work associated with the New Carrollton station for which ground was broken Oct. 30.

Also let to Peter Kiewit in August was a \$4.7-million contract for the first of the corridor's five maintenance-of-way bases. Scheduled for completion in December 1981, the base will occupy a 31-acre site at Odenton, Md.; it includes a 17,000-square-foot building and almost four miles of track.

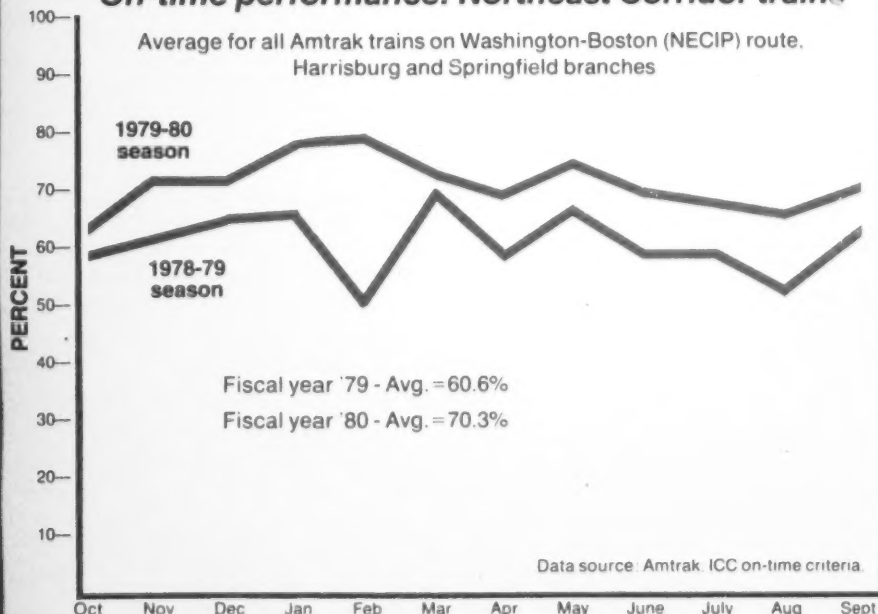
● **Electrification: First visible signs.** Major construction contracting in the 1981 fiscal year (starting Oct. 1, 1980) includes eight section improvement (SI) items, estimated at a total of \$46 million, in territories scattered between Baltimore and Forest Hill, Mass. First visible indications of the North End electrification will begin to appear as concrete is poured for catenary pole bases as part of some '81 SI contracts. With all basic design aspects in hand as a result of the 60% of Electrack's work that has been completed, much of the foundation work for the new electrification can be done by the SI crews, with erection of the poles and catenary following under separate contracts in early 1982. Another aspect of the 1981 SI work on the North End is modification of overhead bridges to accommodate the electrification, with some 40 structures affected.

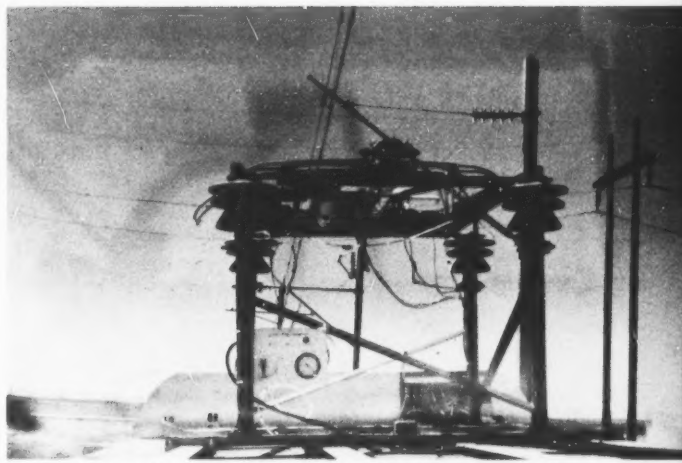
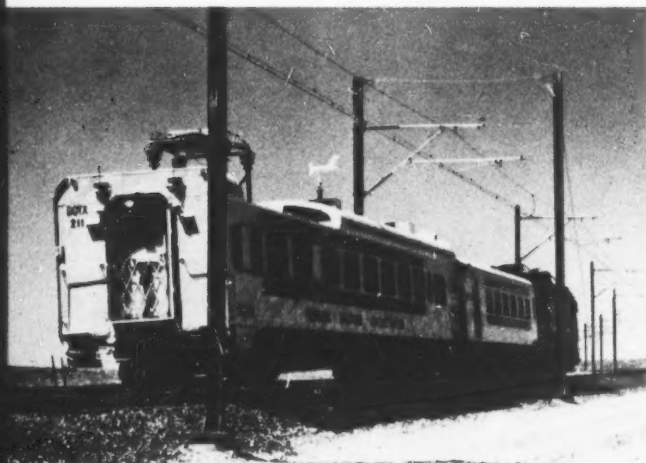
Signaling design in preparation for major installation work starting next year continues under two massive contracts (South End, GRS; North End, WABCO/US&S), each of which was the biggest ever received by the respective suppliers. The GRS contract, which includes multi-aspect signaling in particularly dense-traffic territory, mostly between Ragan (Wilmington) and New York, continues, but with one shift in plans from those discussed previously (*RA*, Apr. 9, 1979, p. 26). Prototype testing of locomotive and wayside equipment for the six-aspect system—which "everybody" expects to involve no technical problems but which therefore generates a particularly strong desire for the assurance that can come only from full-scale evaluation on a hot railroad—will be conducted in the vicinity of Holly Oak interlocking (Delaware) rather than at Pueblo. By scheduling installation on a segment of the NEC as soon as the first reasonably representative hardware is available, some money can be saved.

Attracting great industry interest this fall was the competition (bids closed Nov. 18) for the centralized traffic and electrification control (CTEC) system that will supervise train and traction power operations between Washington and Ragan and between New Haven and Boston. It is required to be compatible with both the 25-Hz South End and 60-Hz North End electrifications, since the corridor must

On-time performance: Northeast Corridor trains

Average for all Amtrak trains on Washington-Boston (NECIP) route, Harrisburg and Springfield branches





British-designed high-speed pantograph for AEM-7 locomotives (shown on test car at Pueblo and in closeup) was redesigned for less-stressful extension to NEC's higher-than-European wire.

ultimately be expected to have CTC from end to end, even though the price is too high for the present NECIP. So, the new system must artfully live with all the locked-in cross-talk potentials from a century of engineering decisions (reflected in the various pieces of hardware that will remain in the system) while taking full advantage of today's state of the art, including consideration of the possibilities of locomotive modifications to ease the overall electrical and electromagnetic compatibility problem. In addition to traditional North American signal suppliers, automotive aerospace subsidiaries, communications outfits, and overseas companies in the railway field, in numerous combinations, have entered the competition for procurement, estimated at \$20 million. Evaluating responses to the performance-spec solicitation will not be a matter of a few days or weeks.

● **A divide or a plateau?** Amtrak's Oct. 26 timetable represents a definite watershed in the program; for the first time, NEC schedules are shorter rather than longer, with an average of seven minutes coming out of Metroliner schedules, nine minutes from N.Y.-Washington conventional trains, and 10 minutes from Boston-N.Y. Amfleet times. Throughout the 1980 work season the candid scheduling reflected in April's timetable (*RA*, Apr. 28, p. 62) kept on-time performance well above previous summers of discontent and delay (see chart).

What are prospects for further reductions as the track continues to improve? On the North End, where F-40 diesels are hauling trains over many miles of Class 6 track at their current 90-mph limit, major improvement will await electrification; a tantalizing foretaste of the possibilities

has been provided by test runs of the LRC train, which has demonstrated an "absolutely gorgeous" ride at 120 mph. The first train inaugurated LRC service between New Haven and Boston on the multistop *Beacon Hill*; the Boston-N.Y. *Shoreliner* is also an LRC, now that the second (and, for the time being, last) LRC is on board.

On the South End—assuming that the learning curve in accomplishing interlocking reconfigurations without disastrous delays stays positive—much depends on the rate of introduction of AEM-7's, scheduled at two a month (from a base of only six locomotives in regular service as of early November). Currently allowed the same 110 mph as Metroliner equipment on Class 6 track, AEM-7's are in effect retiring the few remaining GG-1's, which along with the E-60's are restricted to 80 mph.

Welcome assurance that AEM-7 arrivals will result in a continuing invigoration of the service is provided by the results of their endurance test on the 13-mile high-speed test track at Pueblo, which passed the 100,000-mile mark in early November. Running simulated N.Y.-Washington Corridor schedules at a little shorter overall time than the congressionally-directed goal of 2 hours 40 minutes (including stops) with as many Amfleet cars (5 to 8) as available has clearly demonstrated the suitability and durability of the 101-ton, 7,000-hp locomotive while also uncovering enough problems (so far, all fixable) to make the value of the 120-plus-mph test track equally clear. Test runs on the Boston-N.Y. 3-hours-40-minutes simulation did not demand enough performance to be informative and have been dropped. In addition to various nuts-and-bolts and adjustment matters, continued

120-mph running has uncovered a fatigue problem in the original pantograph which will result in substitution of a different model, redesigned to cope with NEC wire heights that result in running at a more stressful pantograph extension than is encountered in European service.

An important offshoot of the AEM-7 testing is demonstration that the existing all-disk Amfleet brakes will survive the 120-mph corridor service, albeit with increased wear. Amfleet equipment will probably be retrofitted with supplementary tread braking (*RA*, Sept. 8, p. 40), but initial high-speed corridor service need not be dependent on this.

● **A matter of balance.** As the predominant NECIP phases continue to shift from planning, design, and emergency fix-ups to final-design construction and service integration, the battle to put the available money where it will do the most good continues on many fronts. In such items as electrification and signaling packages, bids are being broken down into "core" segments of capacity or capability sufficient to handle initial traffic levels, with alternatives meeting prospective requirements of the 1990s broken out separately, so that trade-off options will stay open as long as possible. Technical assurances and management expertise that may help keep this most complex of engineering projects on its new schedule and within budget are developing continually, and the NECIP FRA-DC/P-Amtrak team can use every bit of it in the struggle to build a truly functional corridor the hard way—under traffic and in an environment where some external factor can toss in a curve ball at any time. (What if those air traffic controllers do get sick, and every flight under 500 miles is suspended?) ■

Market

CARLOADINGS

Loadings of revenue freight in the week ended Nov. 15 totaled 445,683 cars, according to the Association of American Railroads. This was a decrease of 18,990 cars, or 4.1%, compared with the corresponding week last year. Ton-miles generated by carloadings in the week ended Nov. 15 are estimated at 18.1 billion, a decrease of 1.5% below the corresponding week of 1979.

REVENUE FREIGHT CARLOADINGS

Commodity	Nov. 15 week	Nov. 8 week
Grain	32,591	36,976
Farm products	5,561	5,473
Metallic ores	25,705	27,077
Coal	112,214	119,434
Crushed stone, gravel & sand	14,685	14,886
Nonmetallic minerals	14,282	15,562
Grain mill products	16,992	16,928
Food and kindred products	17,484	17,945
Primary forest products	20,127	20,258
Lumber & wood products (except furniture)	8,942	9,092
Pulp, paper & allied products	19,290	19,374
Chemicals & allied products	28,884	27,338
Petroleum products	5,386	5,328
Stone, clay & glass products	16,184	15,910
Coke	5,696	5,485
Metals & products	15,445	14,830
Motor vehicles & equipment	20,333	19,713
Waste & scrap materials	13,713	12,917
Forwarder & shipping assn. traffic	10,581	11,230
All other carloads	41,361	41,591
LCL traffic	227	249
Total cars loaded	445,683	457,596
Cumulative total 46 weeks	20,121,960	21,297,599
Estimated revenue ton-miles (billions), 46 weeks	812.9	810.6

PIGGYBACK LOADINGS

U.S. piggyback loadings for the week ended Nov. 8 totaled 33,206 cars (9.6% below the corresponding 1979 week) and 60,075 trailers or containers (down 6.0% from 1979). Cumulative volume for the first 45 weeks of 1980 is 1,448,835* cars (down 10.8% from 1979) and 2,631,694* trailers or containers (down 8.2% from 1979).

CANADIAN CARLOADINGS

Canadian railway revenue freight loaded in the seven-day period ended Oct. 21 totaled 5.6 million tons (down 6.5% from 1979). Cars loaded totaled 82,359 (down 7.0% from 1979). Cumulative loadings for 1980 were up to 213 million tons (up 0.5% from 1979).

*Revised

● **Norfolk & Western.**—Is building 50 gondola cars in its Roanoke Shops. Production began Nov. 13 and is to be completed in April 1981. At that time NW will shift to production of open-top coal cars and plans to build them at the rate of five per working day throughout the remainder of the year. NW President Robert W. Claytor says that while the entire equipment program for 1981 has not been worked out, "the traffic outlook for the coming year does not justify large equipment purchases." NW estimates its 1980 capital expenditures will total about \$147 million—\$93 million for equipment and \$54 million for roadway improvements.

● **Trailer Train Finance N.V.**—This wholly owned subsidiary of Trailer Train has closed a \$40-million deal with investment bankers in Europe to provide Eurodollar financing for acquisition of 920 cars—730 intermodal cars for Trailer Train and 190 boxcars for subsidiary Railbox. The \$40 million is in 12-year bonds issued by Trailer Train Finance N.V., which is located in the Netherlands Antilles; proceeds from the sale of the bonds (which are not available to U.S. investors) will be used by Trailer Train Finance N.V. to buy equipment trust certificates issued by Trailer Train and Railbox. The certificates will become collateral for the Eurobonds. Trailer Train notes that the cars will be acquired from U.S. builders and that European investors will not have a direct interest in them. The trustee of the equipment trust, a U.S. bank, Trailer Train says, will have a security interest and will receive payments from Trailer Train and Railbox in amounts which, over the 12-year life of the equipment trust, will pay the principal, interest, and expenses of the trust. Trailer Train President Curtis D. Buford commented: "While some U.S. companies have utilized Eurodollar financing, this transaction is the first of its kind to be secured by equipment trust certificates.... We undertook this Eurodollar financing in order to broaden the base of our available sources of capital. We expect to avail ourselves of the Eurodollar market on a regular basis when conditions warrant, but we'll continue to finance the greater share of our acquisitions in the United States."

● **Wisconsin & Southern.**—Has received grants and loan guarantees totaling \$5.5 million to be used for purchase of new maintenance equipment and locomotives; for rehabilitation of its right of way; and as working capital. W&S is a subsidiary of FSC Corp. of Pittsburgh. Its line runs from North Milwaukee to Oshkosh. Supplying the funds are the Federal Railroad Administration, with a grant of \$2.8 million; the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, with a grant of \$691,745; and the Farmers Home Administration, which has guaranteed a loan in the amount of \$2 million. The railroad will supply an additional \$864,700 for track rehabilitation.

